2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

The custom of tattooing, as it was practised by the ancient Guaycurú is described by Father Dobrizhoffer in much the following way. The Abiponian women, says the Father, [1]) not content with the marks common to both sexes, have their face, breast, and arms covered with black figures of various shapes, so that they present the appearance of a Turkish carpet. As soon as a young woman is of age to be married, she is ordered to be marked according to custom. She reclines her head upon the lap of an old woman and is pricked. Thorns are used for a pencil, and ashes mixed with blood for paint. The old woman, sticking the points of the thorns deep into the flesh, describes various figures till the whole face streams with blood. The first day she is sent home with her face half pricked with the thorns, and is recalled the next and the next after that, to have the rest of her face, the breast, and the arms pricked in like manner. Meantime she is shut up for several days in her father's tent and wrapped in a hide that she may receive no injury from the cold air. Carefully abstaining from meat, fish, and some other sorts of food, she feeds upon nothing but a little fruit which grows upon brambles and conduces much towards cooling the blood. [2])

From Dobrizhoffer's account it appears that tattooing was practised by the ancient Guaycurú in the same way as by the present-day Chaco tribes.

Among the puberty customs we may also, in a certain sense, reckon the perforation of the ear-lobes for the insertion of wooden plugs or tubes. The perforation takes place even before the age of puberty, when the boy or girl is five or six years old, but the wooden ornaments are inserted later and are a sign that the boy or girl in question is regarded as a man or woman. The ear-lobe is pierced with a cactus thorn by an old woman, a grass or small wooden pin being inserted so as to prevent the wound from closing. Later on bigger and bigger pins are inserted, by which the holes are more and more extended, and lastly the plug or tube, which forms one of the most prominent ornaments of the Indians. The wooden plugs which the Tobas formerly wore in their ear-lobes, were so thick and heavy that they hung nearly down to the shoulders. In our own days they are only used by the Argentine Pilága, not by the Bolivian Tobas. It is to be observed that although the ear-lobes of both sexes are perforated, the ear-plugs or tubes are among the Choroti, Mataco, and Ashluslay worn chiefly by men, seldom by women, whereas among the Tobas *only* men wear them. These ornaments seem to have chiefly a magical significance.

[1]) Dobrizhoffer, *An Account of the Abipones*, II. 20 sq.

[2]) This fruit is evidently the tasi fruit mentioned above, which thus is still eaten by the Toba women when they have to observe ceremonial fasting.